

SOME HISTORIC EPISCOPAL CHURCHES IN VIRGINIA



BY EDITH DABNEY TUNIS.

AS LONG as there is an Old Dominion, or as long as there exists one man or woman to boast him or herself a true Virginian, the old Virginia churches will live among the most revered and hallowed memories of a glorious Commonwealth.

Beginning with the old tower at Jamestown, there remain to-day more than a score of these sacred edifices built by the early settlers who planted the first shoot of English civilization in Virginia soil.

Jamestown.
The Jamestown Church, dedicated May 9, 1607, was erected by the Society of Colonial Dames as a memorial and protection to the ruins of the churches of 1639 and 1642, the preserved foundations of which are visible behind the iron railings on the interior of the new church. Mr. Edward Wheelwright, of Boston, the architect, faithfully followed as well as possible, and as far as information from a study of the original foundations could be had, the lines and plans of the churches of 1617, 1639 and 1642. The old chancel has been left untouched, the tower is supposed to be the remains of the church destroyed during Bacon's Rebellion, or what is perhaps more likely, those of a church built just after that event. Some of the sacred vessels of the first Jamestown Church are still to be seen. The silver chalice, paten and alms basin inscribed: "For the Use of James City Parish Church, are in charge of the vestry at Williamsburg, but should James City Parish ever revive, must be returned to it. A silver plate, part of the communion service presented by Governor Edmund Andross in 1644, still exists, belonging also to the church of Virginia. Other pieces of old church furniture now in use are a silver vase and baptismal font, presented by the Jaquelines in 1733, which, when an act of assembly ordered the sale of church property in 1785, passed by right of private donation to Mr. John Ambler, a descendant of Edward Jaquelin. Thanks to the Society for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the gravestone of the church is still in place, and the old church is now a ruin, and the yew and mulberry trees towering around and above it afford dense shade for the quiet sleepers in this historic spot.

St. Luke's, Smithfield.
Contemporary with the second church at Jamestown, though built a century earlier, in 1639, St. Luke's, in Smithfield, lives to-day the oldest church in America. The workmanship of this church is truly remarkable, the material, of course, having been brought from abroad, the present condition of the church is a state of chaotic ruin, and the yew and mulberry trees towering around and above it afford dense shade for the quiet sleepers in this historic spot.

St. John's, Hampton.
Having felt the fires and strife of three wars, St. John's Church, Hampton, knows now the peaceful existence of a quiet town. Built somewhere between 1650 and 1667, when Hampton Parish was called by the name of Kichotan, St. John's was used as a barracks in the War of 1812, and from then to 1824 went rapidly to decay. All the church furniture was lost; the doors, windows and glass were gone, leaving nothing but bare walls and a leaky roof, while the graveyard was lost in a tangle of shrubbery. In 1824, however, the church was repaired, and on January 8, 1830, was consecrated by Bishop Moore, when it has been one of the most prosperous and interesting churches in the country.

Westover.
On that portion of the Westover plantation known as Evolution, still stands Westover Church, built by Colonel Byrd in 1690, in accordance with the law passed by Governor Yeardley in 1621, requiring a house of worship and burying ground to be built on all plantations. The church was moved to its present site in 1731, at the order of the wife of the third William Byrd, for the convenience of the parishioners. Federal cavalry troops used the sacred building as a stable during the Civil War, causing great damage to the interior. Since that time repairs have been made, and the altar at which the Byrds and other owners of the fair estate worshipped is honored and revered by those who come from North and South, from this country and abroad.

Ware Church.
In historic Gloucester county, famed as the true abiding place of Powhatan, is old Ware Church, built supposedly in 1633, though which, in the meantime, has been more than once repaired. When the new chancel floor was put in in 1854, many tombstones showing quaint and curious epitaphs were covered. The graveyard, in the midst of which the church is placed, is enclosed by the customary wall of English appearance, fairly well preserved,

and holds numerous and rare old monuments.

Grace Church, Yorktown.
Probably Grace Church, Yorktown, has known stormier days than any in America, having been built about 1700, the material being of that particular kind of marble taken from the hills in the vicinity. In 1781 the windows and doors were broken and destroyed by Cornwallis and the church used as a magazine, and from then until it was burned in 1815, this once fair acre of God's saw sad days. But the burning only served to make the stone stouter and firmer, so it was easily rebuilt, and this time the wings forming the T were left off, leaving an oblong nave. During the fire the bell, which had been presented by Queen Anne in 1704, and the bells afterwards placed in the vestry-room. They were discovered in Philadelphia after the Civil War by Rev. Mr. Nicholson, being later recast, and in 1889 the new bell, made of the old, was rehung in the churchyard.

St. Peter's, New Kent.
In New Kent, which, unfortunately, knows no longer the prosperity of olden days, is St. Peter's Church, dating back to 1703, though the vestry books of the parish opened in 1682. The cost of St. Peter's is said to have been 146,000 weight of tobacco, and this did not include the steeple, which was added twelve years later.

Yeocomico.
One of the most interesting of all Virginia churches is Yeocomico, in Westmoreland county. Built in 1706, the edifice was repaired about 1800 after the Revolutionary troops quartered there in watching the British on the Potomac were withdrawn. During their stay the troops wrought havoc with the godly building, not only using the communion table as a butcher's block, but making of the large and beautiful marble font a bowl in which to brew their punch. Thanks to a Presbyterian, Mr. Murphy, whose estate of thousands of acres surrounded the church, the sacred furniture was regained and restored to Yeocomico. The building is a bit rough and rude in appearance, though in very good repair. Over the front door the date 1706 is carved in the stone, and the date 1814 is carved in the stone of the door. The church is a simple, unadorned structure, with a large, plain, unadorned steeple. The interior is a simple, unadorned structure, with a large, plain, unadorned steeple.

Eastern Shore Chapel.
The exact age of the Eastern Shore Chapel, in Lynnhaven Parish is not known, though the parish itself was established before 1643. Cape Henry being the first place where service was held in the parish, and the first landing point of the early settlers. As repairs were made to the Eastern Shore Chapel in 1725, the date of building must have been some time previous to that year. While regular service is held in it, the church is still used occasionally, being at this late date in fairly good repair.

Bruton.
But of all the old places of worship, Bruton Parish Church has been longer in continuous use than any. Built in 1710, the edifice one sees to-day is known to native and alien alike by the lines written upon the interior by some unknown poet in 1841: Thou art crumbling to the dust, old pile, etc. Bruton is no longer in use save for an occasional funeral service, and but for the visits of the casual tourist or stranger guest its doors would remain unopened, itself a monument to an irrevocable past.

St. Paul's, Norfolk.
Built in 1739, serving as a refuge for women and children when Dunmore's fleet stormed Norfolk; battered

William A. R. Goodwin, the present rector, a restoration took place, and once more the church was given the former colonial appearance. The cost was \$27,000, the work being done with absolute fidelity to the original construction, and to-day the beautiful edifice graces Williamsburg with the lines and design of 1710. The red velvet canopied pew of the Governors is a memorial to Alexander Spotswood, under whose administration the church was built, and whose name is emboldered in gold upon the canopy top; the chair in the pew a memory of Lord Botetourt. On Christmas and Easter Day the old communion service of the first Jamestown Church is used while once every month that presented by George IV. The silver-gold service given by Queen Anne is also still at Bruton. The font is that taken from Jamestown, from which Pocahontas is said to have been baptized. The graveyard is much larger than the majority, the tombs the oldest in the country, while the wall surrounding all is wonderfully well preserved, though built in 1754.

Vauter's.
Next in age to Bruton is quaint Vauter's Church, in Essex. On a branch of Blackburn's Creek, the brick church was erected in 1711, and having been twice repaired, is in a good state yet, for while the walls are somewhat cracked over doors and windows, with proper care the edifice will serve many generations. The church stands on the Garnett estate, and but for Mrs. Muscon Garnett, who, when she heard that bricks and stones were being carried away, threatened to prosecute the next offender, Vauter's would probably have shared the sad fate of other colonial churches.

Christ Church, Lancaster.
Christ Church, Lancaster county, which was built in 1732 by Robert, known as "King" Carter, at his own expense, deserves particular mention owing to the past history and present condition. Since 1732 but few repairs have been made, and the staunch walls of three foot thickness, are yet sound, while the majority of the glass in the large windows is that originally placed there. The building is of cruciform shape, the whole north cross, with the large pew near the altar being reserved for the Carters for all time. The freestone flagging is smooth and solid; the old high-backed pews are still to be seen, and the walnut communion table shows few of the scars of time. Not a round from the chancel rail has disappeared; the very beautiful font and old cedar dial post belonging to the first church, and inscribed with the name and date "John Carter, 1702" are in their old time places. Christ Church is situated in the customary grove of trees; the brick wall, which unfortunately shows signs of ruin, as well as the tombstones, the largest, richest and heaviest in the country being placed here over "King" Carter and his two wives. The perfect material, faultless workmanship and beautiful design, must shame the modern architects and cause just pride to those who count among their ancestors the man who had both the wealth and the desire to erect such a temple of God.

Blandford.
Blandford needs but a passing mention, its ivy-crowned walls and ruined graveyard of 1737 being only too well known to native and alien alike by the lines written upon the interior by some unknown poet in 1841: Thou art crumbling to the dust, old pile, etc.

Blandford is no longer in use save for an occasional funeral service, and but for the visits of the casual tourist or stranger guest its doors would remain unopened, itself a monument to an irrevocable past.

St. Paul's, Norfolk.
Built in 1739, serving as a refuge for women and children when Dunmore's fleet stormed Norfolk; battered

by a ball fired from the frigate Liverpool, New Year's Day, 1776, St. Paul's, in the midst of its clinging ivy and rare old graveyard, gives promise of serving yet many generations to come. A cannon ball is still embedded in a corner of the eastern gable, where it is an object of interest to all comers. The burying-ground is carpeted in springtime with buttercups; a fountain plays quietly in the center, and the ivied trunk of a weeping willow brought as a sapling from the grave of Napoleon, is planted beneath the resting place of the frigate's cannon ball.

Aquia.
On a high eminence on the road between Alexandria and Fredericksburg, stands old Aquia Church, erected in the year 1757, from the gallery of which superb views of the Potomac and Rappahannock are to be had. Curiously enough this cruciform church, with its noble and imposing exterior, is of two stories, an observatory being placed on the top, which is reached by a stairway from the gallery. In 1860, at a cost of \$1,800, it was repaired through the interest and generosity of the Moncure family. The gallery of Aquia was built in accordance with the English custom of appropriating the galleries to the rich and noble, a custom which began with the royal family in St. George's Church, Windsor, and was followed in Virginia.

Trinity.
Portsmouth claims an old church in Trinity, built in 1762, on a lot in what was then the very center of the town, the donor of the lot being William Crawford. Here again is noticed the usual cross shape of Colonial churches, but instead of the customary brick, the walls are of stone, dark with age. Numerous repairs have been made on the interior, this church having been, as it is now, in almost continuous use.

Abingdon.
The present Abingdon Church, in Mathews county, stands near where the original did. 1760 is cut over the door, but whether it was built in that year or not no one seems to know. About half a century ago, or perhaps still longer, the edifice was repaired by Colonel Lewis, of Eagle Point, whose family was always closely identified with this parish.

Christ Church, Alexandria.
The oldest and most cherished church in Alexandria is Christ Church, revered as the place of worship of the immortal Washington and incomparable Lee. The mural tablets on either side of the chancel are memorials to the two members of the church most loved and honored of all Virginians. In order to build the church in 1765, a tax of 31,185 pounds of tobacco was levied upon the parish. The high-pitched building admits of galleries, and the mortar used in its construction is two-thirds lime and one-third sand, exactly the reverse of the proportions now considered proper, a fact which undoubtedly accounts for the durability of the ancient walls. The shingles that are still left are one, instead of half an inch thick, like those of to-day. Though, as has been said, the church admitted of repairs, they were put up only after the Revolution.

Pollock.
Next in age is Pollock, or Mt. Vernon Church, the date 1773 being inscribed on and near the head of one of the ornamental columns decorating the chancel. When steps were being taken towards the repair of Pollock, the following plea was used in a report distributed in circular form: "It was to this church that Washington for some years regularly repaired, at a distance of six or seven miles, never permitting any company to prevent the observance of the Lord's Day. And shall it now be permitted to sink into ruin for want of a few hundred dollars to arrest the decay already begun? The families, which once worshipped there, are indeed nearly all gone, and those who remain are not competent to its complete repair, about there are immortal beings around it, and not far distant from it, who might be forever blessed by the word faithfully preached therein. In appearance Pollock is more like a Quaker meeting-house than an Episcopal church, and the surroundings, which once may have been very fitting, seem now both inadequate and bare.

Falls.
Falls Church of 1773, so-called from its proximity to one of the falls of the Potomac, presents much the same heavy architecture as Pollock, but has no gallery, and shows a steeple of more recent date. This church was deserted by Episcopalians many years ago.

St. Paul's, King George.
By far the best example we have of the cruciform church is St. Paul's, in King George county. Erected in 1766 and repaired about 1820, St. Paul's stands to-day one of the most convenient and beautiful of the old Virginia temples of God. The communion service, which is still in use, was presented by Colonel Henry Fitzhugh, of Stafford county.

St. John's, Richmond.
The exact age of St. John's, Richmond, is questioned; but that it will live immortally as the sanctuary of patriotism and religion before and during two dreadful wars is a fact that will be undisputed in all the generations to come. It was in St. John's that Patrick Henry shouted: "Give me liberty or give me death." Here, too, the Randolphs, Lees and other upholders of a cause called the cottons to battle. In 1785 the church was in a very bad condition financially, and in 1790 the vestry passed a resolution allowing other denominations to make use of it. In 1828 a proposition was made to remove the old church or erect a new one. This, however, caused such indignation that the minister and a number of the vestrymen resigned, the result being the formation of a new congregation.

Church Problems of To-Day.

BY THE REV. J. J. GRAVATT,
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For some years the church has been greatly interested in the alarming condition of social and family life in this country, caused by the large number of divorces. At the General Convention in Boston a more stringent canon was passed, which has doubtless done much good. But it is evident that many in the church are not satisfied with the present legislation, as the proposed canon forbidding the clergy to remarry any divorced persons for which fifty-one out of seventy-four bishops voted) was defeated in the House of Deputies "by divided dioceses having a positive vote in the order of the clergy of 30 to 21, and of the laity of 25 to 24." It is most likely, therefore, that this discussion will be before the coming convention, and all the more so as in the past three years there have been no less than five instances of defiance of all religious obligations and of personal morality.

Because of the unfortunate notoriety of a trial for heresy, the question of a court of appeals will demand most serious consideration at the hands of the approaching convention.

One of the most important problems now before the church is as to the best method of reaching and influencing for good the large number of negroes in this country. The negroes are asking for a bishop of their own race—in other words, that missionary jurisdiction be set apart in a diocese or in a group of dioceses, to be presided over by a negro bishop. On this matter there is a great difference of opinion. Some are strongly opposed, while others are in favor of it. The great and burning question before the church is the evangelization of the world. As never before, a wave of missionary interest is passing over the church. The fields are white to the harvest. In numberless ways, under God's providence, doors are open to the Christian missionary. One most hopeful sign is the large and intelligent interest now in this subject by the men of the church. At the Boston convention it was decided that the men should present an offering at Richmond for missions, as a thank-offering for God's mercies and blessings to this church and country during the 300 years of our history. As is usual at the meeting of the General Convention, missionaries from this land and from foreign countries will come to tell of their work and fields.

At this convention the general secretary of the Board of Missions, the Rev. Dr. Lloyd, after a tour of the mission fields at home and abroad, will tell of what he has seen and heard.

Peculiar interest will attach to the historical services of this convention, as this year is the 300th anniversary of the planting of the church in this country. What Jamestown has meant for this land will doubtless be emphasized. We will be fortunate in having with us the Bishop of London, who not only has a most interesting personality, but represents the see which held jurisdiction over the Colonial church in this country.